

WEEK Three
WASHINGTON ST VS USC

USC beats Wash St 39-36 on Daniels' 3 TDs, Tufele's block

LOS ANGELES -- Southern California trailed by 13 points in the second half, and the smallish Coliseum crowd grumbled at the prospect of an already shaky season slipping away entirely from this powerhouse program.

Right before the Trojans really got in trouble, they started making big plays. And when Jay Tufele slipped into the perfect spot and got his big arm up to block a field goal, USC's season was back on track.

J.T. Daniels passed for 241 yards and three touchdowns, and Tufele blocked Washington State's attempt at a tying field goal with 1:41 to play in USC's 18th consecutive home victory, 39-36 Friday night.

After back-to-back road losses to Stanford and Texas put the Trojans in dire September straits, the Trojans (2-2, 1-1 Pac-12) fell behind the Cougars early, but made a series of big stops and slick adjustments down the stretch to remain unbeaten at the Coliseum under coach Clay Helton.

None was bigger than the special-teams call on the Cougars' last field goal attempt, allowing Tufele to get in an ideal position for the block.

"The kids knew exactly what to do," Helton said. "Our last team meeting, we showed it. We showed the gap that would be open. It was the absolute perfect call at the right time."

One year after the Trojans took their first loss of last season in a Friday night game in Pullman, USC showed resilience and fourth-quarter tenacity while avoiding a disastrous start to the season. Vavae Malepeai rushed for his second touchdown with 8:03 to play as USC rallied from two scores down in the second half and eventually held off the Cougars (3-1, 0-1). "I've always thought that adversity kind of defines who you are," Helton said. "Being in that second half down two scores, a bunch of great kids defined who they are as men, and I can't tell you how proud I am of them."

Gardner Minshew passed for 344 yards and three touchdowns in the new quarterback's latest strong performance for Washington State, while James Williams and Max Borghi rushed for scores.

Easop Winston caught his second TD pass from Minshew with 10:15 to go, but the Trojans responded with a 56-yard scoring drive. After Malepeai's go-ahead TD and Daniels' pinpoint 2-point conversion pass to Tyler Vaughns, Washington State drove into field goal range in the waning minutes. That's where Tufele swatted down Blake Mazza's 38-yard attempt with relative ease.

"Looked like they got a pretty good push, and it looked like we struck it low," Washington State coach Mike Leach said. "I thought we played pretty good. We played pretty hard across the board. I think our effort is great. We've got to become a more consistent team."

The Trojans' special teams have made several significant mistakes this season, but the unit executed flawlessly at the biggest moment and then celebrated wildly. "I knew that if we ran it right, it would work perfectly," USC linebacker Cameron Smith said. "It was one of those things we practice and plan, and it worked our way."

The Cougars led 24-17 at halftime, and they opened the second half with a 75-yard drive capped by Borghi's 13-yard TD run before the Trojans finally responded.

Pittman, whose exceptional catch shortly before halftime was ruled just out of bounds, took a 50-yard pass to the house. USC's defense stiffened and forced two punts before St. Brown's gorgeous TD catch and the extra point put the Trojans up 31-30. "We left too many drives out there," said Minshew, who went 37 for 52 without an interception. "That was all on me."

But Winston immediately caught a 59-yard pass down the middle and followed it up with a 4-yard TD catch. Washington State's 2-point conversion attempt failed, and the Cougars didn't score again.

DANIELS' GROWTH

Vaughns and Michael Pittman caught early TD passes from Daniels before the precocious freshman found his high school teammate, Amon-Ra St. Brown, for a beautiful 30-yard TD pass with 14:31 to play. Daniels went 17 for 26 without an interception. "Each game is more experience," Daniels said. "Personally, I'm pretty happy with this one. Things to learn from and things to celebrate."

COLISEUM CROWD

The weekday attendance of 52,421 was USC's smallest for a home game since 2001, but was still bigger than many expected for the school's first Friday home game since 1999. Parking and tailgating around the Coliseum is severely limited while the 95-year-old stadium undergoes an extensive renovation.

THE TAKEAWAY

Washington State: After opening the season with three victories over modest nonconference opposition, the Cougars responded fairly well to a big step up in competition. Late-game execution wasn't perfect, particularly on special teams, but this loss is no embarrassment for the Cougs or Minshew, who looked excellent again. USC: The Trojans responded to a major gut check with a series of big second-half plays, particularly by a defense that looked hapless before the break. Although they still made far too many mistakes and committed too many penalties, they'll grow from this one -- and their freshman quarterback is getting better every week.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
WSU	3	21	6	6	36
USC	7	10	7	15	39

Scoring Summary -----

	WSU	USC
FIRST QUARTER		
USC TD 12:56 Vavae Malepeai 3 Yd Run (Michael Brown Kick)		7
5 plays, 75 yards, 2:04	0	
WSU FG 7:19 Blake Mazza 50 Yd Field Goal		7
4 plays, 7 yards, 1:33	3	
second Quarter		
WSU TD 13:29 James Williams 4 Yd Run (Blake Mazza Kick)		7
14 plays, 59 yards, 7:01	10	
USC TD 12:23 Tyler Vaughns 9 Yd pass from JT Daniels (Michael Brown Kick)3 plays, 74 yards, 1:06		14
WSU TD 9:55 Easop Winston 28 Yd pass from Gardner Minshew (Blake Mazza Kick) 6 plays, 75 yards, 2:28		14
WSU TD 1:39 Dezmon Patmon 7 Yd pass from Gardner Minshew (Blake Mazza Kick) 11 plays, 75 yards, 4:24		14
USC FG 0:00 Michael Brown 26 Yd Field Goal		17
12 plays, 66 yards, 1:39	24	
third Quarter		
WSU TD 10:21 Max Borghi 13 Yd Run (Two-Point Run Conversion Failed)		17
11 plays, 75 yards, 4:39	30	
USC TD 9:03 Michael Pittman Jr. 50 Yd pass from JT Daniels (Michael Brown Kick) 3 plays, 65 yards, 1:18		24
fourth Quarter		
USC TD 14:31 Amon-Ra St. Brown 30 Yd pass from JT Daniels (Michael Brown Kick) 9 plays, 64 yards, 3:47		31
WSU TD 10:15 Easop Winston 4 Yd pass from Gardner Minshew (Two-Point Pass Conversion Failed) 7 plays, 76 yards, 4:16		36
USC TD 8:03 Vavae Malepeai 2 Yd Run (JT Daniels Pass to Tyler Vaughns for Two-Point Conversion)5 plays, 56 yards, 2:12		39

Team Stats	WSU	USC
First Downs	24	23
Total Yards	435	354
Total Plays	76	57
Avg Gain Per Play	5.7	6.2
Net Yards Rushing	91	113
Rushes	24	31
Yards Per Rush	3.8	3.6
Net Yards Passing	344	241
Comp-Att	37-52	17-26
Yards Per Pass	6.6	9.3
Times Sacked	1	2
Yds Lost To Sacks	-1	-17
Interceptions	0	0
Punts	4	5
Punt Average	46.3	39.4
Penalties	11	8
Penalty Yards	118	65
Fumbles	1	4
Fumbles Lost	0	0
Possession	35:49	24:11

Individual Stats

RUSHING

WSU	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
32 James Williams	17	54	3.2	8	1
21 Max Borghi	3	29	9.7	14	1
16 Gardner Minshew II	4	8	2.0	4	0
24 Keith Harrington	0	0	-	-	0
USC					
29 Vavae Malepeai	13	78	6.0	21	2
7 Stephen Carr	8	77	9.6	50	0
28 Aca'Cedric Ware	1	-5	-5.0	0	0
18 JT Daniels	6	-13	-2.2	7	0

PASSING

WSU	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Gardner MinshewII	37	52	344	6.6	3	0	145.8
USC							
JT Daniels	17	26	241	9.3	3	0	181.3

RECEIVING

WSU	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
8 Easop Winston Jr.	6	143	23.8	59	2
6 Jamire Calvin	7	63	9.0	25	0
12 Dezmon Patmon	6	55	9.2	12	1
32 James Williams	7	34	4.9	14	0
17 Kyle Sweet	2	21	10.5	17	0
24 Keith Harrington	1	11	11.0	11	0
21 Max Borghi	4	8	2.0	5	0
5 Travell Harris	1	8	8.0	8	0
1 Davontavean Martin	3	1	0.3	3	0
USC					
Michael Pittman Jr.	2	72	36.0	50	1
21 Tyler Vaughns	7	64	9.1	21	1
1 Velus Jones Jr.	2	48	24.0	44	0
8 Amon-Ra St. Brown	2	38	19.0	30	1
13 Trevon Sidney	1	12	12.0	12	0
28 Aca'Cedric Ware	1	5	5.0	5	0
7 Stephen Carr	2	2	1.0	3	0